

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
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C O N F I D E N T I A L ALGIERS 1865

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, AG, TU
SUBJECT: ALGERIAN-TUNISIAN RELATIONS: BELKHODJA GETS BIG HELLO

REF: TUNIS 5022 (NOTAL)

1. ALGERIANS MADE MAJOR PROPAGANDA EVENT OF JULY 16-22
VISIT OF TUNISIAN INTERIOR MINISTER BELKHODJA. IN ADDI-
TION TO MEETING WITH BOUMEDIENE AND EXHCNAGING BOUMEDIENE-
BOURGUIBA MESSAGES PRAISING GOOD RELATIONS IN GENERAL
AND NEW GAS PIPELINE IN PARITCULAR, BELKHODJA TRAVELLED
WIDELY IN ALGERIA AND PARTICIPATED IN VARIOUS PUBLIC
RELATIONS EVENTS. ALGERIAN INTERIOR MINISTER ABDELGHANI
WAS BELKHODJA'S CONSTANT ESCORT, BUT TUNISIAN MET WITH
WIDE RANGE OF OTHER LEADING ALGERIANS AS WELL. NO LESS
THAN THREE CABINET MINISTERS, ABDELGHANI, FON MIN
BOUTEFLIKA AND TOURISM MINISTER AKBI GREETED HIM AT AIRPORT.

2. COMMUNIQUE, WHICH ABDELGHANI AND BEL-
KHODJA SIGNED AT AIRPORT ON LATTER'S DEPARTURE, SUG-
GESTS THAT VISIT MORE CEREMONIAL
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THAN SUBSTANTIVE. THE TWO MINISTERS WILL CONTINUE EXCHANGES
AND WORK TO MAKE EXISTING MIXED COMMISSIONS MORE
ACTIVE. COOPERATION IN PUBLIC SECURITY DOMIAN TO BE
EXPANDED THROUGH CREATION OF PERMANENT MIXED
COMMISSION, AND GREATER CONTACT BETWEEN FRONTIER AUTH-
ORITIES TO BE ENCOURAGED. ALGIERS AND TUNIS ARE TO BE-
COME TWIN CITIES AND SIMILAR PAIRINGS ALONG FRONTIER

TO BE PROMOTED.

3. IN DEPARTURE STATEMENT, BELKHODJA TOUCHED LIGHTLY ON SAHARA QUESTION. TUNISIA, HE SAIVFJ WOULD DO NOTHING TO COMPLICATE SITUATION, WHICH CONCERNS ENTIRE MAGHREB AND NOT MERELY ALGERIA AND MOROCCO. UN RESOLUTIONS ON SHARARA, HE CONCLUDED, "REMAIN VERY VALID."

4. FROM OUR CONVERSATIONS AROUND TOWN WE CONCLUDE THAT BOTH SIDES ANXIOUS THAT VISIT SHOULD BE FITTING COMPLEMENT TO CONCRETE STEP FORWARD REPRESENTED BY CONCLUSION OF GAS PIPELINE AGREEMENT. FOREIGN JOURNALIST SAYS TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR TOLD HIM THAT TUNISIANS ANXIOUS FOR BETTER RELATIONS WITH ALGERIANS TO COOUNTER DANGER REPRESENTED BY QADHAFI. GOOD TUNISIAN-MOROCCAN RELATIONSHIP NOT SUFFICIENT SINCE MOROCCO FAR AWAY. TUNISIAN AMBASSADOR INDICATED TO JOURNALIST THAT HIS GOVERNMENT INTENDED TO BE SOMEWHAT LESS PRO-MOROCCAN ON SAHARA QUESTION THAN IT HAD BEEN PREVIOUSLY. (BELKHODJA'S ELYPTICAL REMARKS ON SAHARA DO NOT GIVE MUCH TO GO ON ONE WAY OR THE OTHER.) ALGERIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL TOLD US THAT ALGERIANS HAD "GONE WHOLE HOG" ON VISIT AS RESPONSE TO GOOD RECEPTION GIVEN BOUTEFLIKA IN TUNISIA EARLIER THIS YEAR.

5. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH VISIT SHOWS THAT ALGERIAN-TUNISIAN RELATIONS ARE IN REASONABLY GOOD REPAIR, WE DO NOT BELIEVE, CONFIDENTIAL

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AS DO SOME OF OUR COLLEAGUES HERE, THAT IT PORTENDS GREAT THINGS FOR FUTURE. SPECIFICALLY, WE DISCOUNT RUMOR THAT ALGERIANS HOPE TO GET TUNISIANS INTO POSITION TO MEDIATE SAHARA PROBLEM. BELKHODJA'S STATEMENT ON SAHARA SUGGETS THAT, LIKE OTHER POTENTIALLY INTERESTED PARTIES, TUNISIANS' PRIMARY CONCERN IS TO KEEP THEIR HEADS OUT OF LINE OF SAHARA FIRE.HAYNES

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